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| **Character Profiles** |

**Offred**:  Offred is the narrator of the story. She is a thirty-three-year-old woman who is assigned to the Commander as his Handmaid. She is expected to produce children for him. Offred never says what her name was in the "time before." In that time she was married to Luke and they had a young daughter. She worked in a library. But when the Republic of Gilead was formed, all that changed. She lost her job and as a woman was not allowed to own money or property. She, Luke and their daughter tried to escape but were caught near the Canadian border, after which Offred was sent to the Red Center to be trained as a Handmaid. When she was assigned to the Commander she acquired the name Offred, signifying that she had no independent existence, but belonged to Fred, which was the Commander's first name.

Offred is a thoughtful, reflective, sometimes passive woman, not given to rash acts of courage, but hardly reconciled to her new life. She does not accept the propaganda of the new regime and stubbornly retains her right to think for herself. She uses her mental clarity to retain her sanity and help her to cope with her extremely restricted and tormented life. Sometimes, however, she is desperate, keenly feeling how much she has lost and wondering how she can go on living in such a situation. On one occasion she feels like she has been buried alive.

Offred sometimes reproaches herself because she does not have the same courage as her close friend, Moira. Too often, she thinks, she just goes along with what is expected of her because naturally enough she wants to survive. She does not want to end up hanging at the Wall, where the corpses of those who have been executed are left on public display. However, Offred does become reckless when she gets involved with Nick. She knows it is dangerous for her to keep seeing him in his room, but she has been starved of a warm human relationship for so long that it is impossible for her to hold back.

**The Commander**:  The Commander is the mild-mannered head of the household to which Offred is assigned as Handmaid, and the husband of Serena Joy. He is a silver-haired, middle-aged man who occupies a prominent position in the government of Gilead. Offred thinks he looks like a Midwestern bank president. The Commander initiates a clandestine relationship with Offred, in which she visits him in his office. They play Scrabble, and he offers her banned magazines and books to read. Later, he takes her to a nightclub called Jezebel's. The Commander appears to believe in the ideology of Gilead, but he shows no hesitation in breaking its rules. He shows kindness to Offred, but it is a paternalistic kindness, given only from a position of domination. According to the evidence analyzed by Professor Pieixoto, the Commander may have been Frederick R. Waterford, an early leader of Gilead who was a victim of one of the early purges, being accused of liberal tendencies and executed.

**Serena Joy**:  Serena Joy is the Commander's Wife. She is a mean-spirited woman who despises Offred and speaks to her only when she cannot avoid it. In the time before, Serena Joy, whose real name was Pam, was a well-known gospel singer. She also made a name for herself as a counterweight to the women's rights movement, making speeches about how women should stay at home. But having got what she argued for so earnestly, she is not happy. She suffers from arthritis and walks with a cane. She seems to have little purpose in life, spending a lot of her time gardening or sewing. However, although she is a True Believer, Serena Joy is not above cheating the system when it suits her. She so desperately wants a baby, which she is unable to produce herself, that she arranges for Offred to try to get pregnant from Nick.

**Aunt Lydia**:  Aunt Lydia is one of the Aunts who is placed in authority over the Handmaids. At the Red Center, Aunt Lydia is in charge of education programs. She give lectures, always trying to convince the Handmaids that they are much better off than they were in the "time before." She genuinely believes in the virtues of the new order, and tells the Handmaids to accept their duties. At the Center, she shows the Handmaids old pornographic movies, to show them how badly women were treated before. She also presides over the Salvagings and the Particicution, introducing them with a smiling, platitudinous speech that belies the savagery of what is about to take place.

**Moira**:  Moira is Offred's closest friend. In the time before, they were college students together. Then at the Red Center, the spirited, rebellious, independent Moira refused to accept her situation. Twice she tried twice to escape. The first time she faked illness and was taken to a hospital, but her ploy was discovered. She was punished by having her feet severely beaten, and then she was returned to the Center. But this did not break her spirit, and her next attempt to escape was successful. She tied up Aunt Elizabeth, took her uniform and used her pass to make her way through checkpoints. After her escape, Moira became an inspiration to Offred and the other women at the Red Center. Moira escaped detection for about nine months, and planned to slip over the border to Canada. But eventually she was caught. The authorities told her she could either be sent to the colonies or work as a kind of sex servant at Jezebel's. She chose the latter option, which is the last place Offred sees her.

**Nick**:  Nick is a Guardian who is also the Commander's chauffeur. He is an Eye, a member of the secret police, but is also a member of the Mayday resistance, although this only becomes known at the end of the novel. Nick has an affair with Offred. It begins when Serena Joy sends Offred to him because she wants her to become pregnant. Offred and Nick then meet many times, without Serena's knowledge. Offred believes she may be pregnant by Nick, and she feels relief to have for once a genuine human relationship. At the end of the novel, Nick arranges for her escape.

**Janine (Ofwarren)**:  Janine is an emotional, highly-strung woman who Offred meets at the Red Center. At the Testifying session, Janine testifies that she was gang-raped when she was fourteen. She has been so brainwashed that she believes this was her fault. At one point in the Red Center, she appears to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and Moira has to snap her out of it. As a Handmaid, Janine becomes Ofwarren, and gives birth to a baby girl that later turns out to have a birth defect and is killed. Janine believes this is her fault. She is assigned to another Commander.

**Luke**:  Luke is Offred's husband from the time before. He and Offred tried to escape across the border with their daughter, but were caught. Offred does not know what happened to Luke. She keeps thinking about him, hoping he is still alive, but fearing he may be dead.

**Offred's mother**:  Offred's mother appears only in Offred's memories of the "time before." She was a feminist who chose to remain single, having a low opinion of men. She would organize protest marches against male violence, and took her young daughter to a book-burning, where pornographic books and magazines were burnt. Offred did not have an easy relationship with her mother. She lost touch with her and then discovered one day that she had disappeared. Moira later informs Offred that her mother had been sent to the colonies.

**Ofglen**:  Ofglen is a Handmaid who is Offred's companion when they go shopping and walk to the Wall. Offred has a distant relationship with her until she finds out that Ofglen is a member of the resistance. Ofglen eventually commits suicide because she knows the authorities have found her out. She is replaced by another woman who then also becomes known as Ofglen.

**Professor Pieixoto**:  Professor Pieixoto is the scholar who gives the talk on "Problems of Authentication in Reference to The Handmaid's Tale," at the symposium held in 2195. He supplies a lot of background information about Gileadean society.

**Rita**:  Rita is a "Martha." She is a woman of about sixty and is the cook in the Commander's household. She is rather bad-tempered and Offred does not get along with her.

**Cora**:  Cora is a "Martha" (a woman assigned to domestic work) in the Commander's household. She is a little more friendly to Offred than Rita is, and is even willing to tell a small lie for Offred to make sure no questions are asked about the spilled breakfast (ch. 25).

**Aunt Elizabeth**:  Aunt Elizabeth is one of the women in authority at the Reeducation (Red) Center. She is also the victim when Moira makes her escape. Moira ties her up in the basement and takes her uniform. Aunt Elizabeth comes to no permanent harm, however, since later she takes a prominent role in the Birth Day, when Janine gives birth to a baby girl.

Axis to use – Introvert – extrovert

Thinking – feeling

Sensing – intuition

Judging - percieving

Powerful – Weak

Active – Passive

Radical – Conservative

Law-abiding – subversive

Empathetic – self-centred

Idealistic – cynical

Rational – emotional

Hopeful – despairing

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| **Cognitive Style Inventory**©  most recent revision 12/12/06 *-* [*Ross Reinhold, INTJ*](mailto:roscoe@mhtc.net) [**www.PersonalityPathways.com**](http://www.PersonalityPathways.com) |
| Determining one's natural Myers-Briggs Type or one's Personality Type is frequently complicated by our life-long learning experiences. The classic question is: " Am I this way because I learned it or is this just the way I am?"  In reviewing the comparisons in our inventory, you may find yourself drawn equally to opposing choices. In such cases I suggest you try to think back to **how you were** before the age of 12 or even younger if you can recall. The rationale for this suggestion is the fact that by the time we are 3 years old, the core of our cognitive organization is well-fixed. . . although the brain continues to allow some plasticity until puberty.  After the onset of puberty, our adult learning begins to overlay our core personality - which is when the blending of ***nature*** and ***nurture*** becomes more evident. For some people, this "learning" serves to strengthen what is already there, but with others it produces multiple faces to personality. Discovering or rediscovering this innate core of yourself is part of the journey of using personality type to enrich your life.  Each of the four questions of the CSI inventory has two parts. The first part is a general description of the preference choices. The second part is a list of paired statements. Use **both** parts to form your opinion on your more dominant preference. | |

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| **Q1. Which is your most natural energy orientation?**  Every person has two faces. One is directed towards the **OUTER** world of activities, excitements, people, and things. The other is directed inward to the **INNER** world of thoughts, interests, ideas, and imagination.   While these are two different but complementary sides of our nature, most people have an innate preference towards **energy** from either the OUTER or the INNER world. Thus one of their faces, either the ***Extraverted*** (E) or ***Introverted*** (I), takes the lead in their personality development and plays a more **dominant role** in their behavior. | |
| **Extraverted Characteristics**   * Act first, think/reflect later * Feel deprived when cutoff from interaction with the outside world * Usually open to and motivated by outside world of people and things * Enjoy wide variety and change in people relationships | **Introverted Characteristics**   * Think/reflect first, then Act * Regularly require an amount of "private time" to recharge batteries * Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is "closed" to outside world * Prefer one-to-one communication and relationships |
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| **Q2. Which way of Perceiving or understanding is most "automatic" or natural?**  The **Sensing** (S) side of our brain notices the sights, sounds, smells and all the sensory details of the **PRESENT**. It categorizes, organizes, records and stores the specifics from the here and now. It is **REALITY** based, dealing with "what is." It also provides the specific details of memory & recollections from **PAST** events.  The **Intuitive** (N) side of our brain seeks to understand, interpret and form **OVERALL** patterns of all the information that is collected and records these patterns and relationships. It speculates on **POSSIBILITIES**, including looking into and forecasting the **FUTURE**. It is imaginative and conceptual.  While both kinds of perceiving are necessary and used by all people, each of us instinctively tends to favor one over the other. | |
| **Sensing Characteristics**   * Mentally live in the Now, attending to present opportunities * Using common sense and creating practical solutions is automatic-instinctual * Memory recall is rich in detail of facts and past events * Best improvise from past experience * Like clear and concrete information; dislike guessing when facts are "fuzzy" | **Intuitive Characteristics**   * Mentally live in the Future, attending to future possibilities * Using imagination and creating/inventing new possibilities is automatic-instinctual * Memory recall emphasizes patterns, contexts, and connections * Best improvise from theoretical understanding * Comfortable with ambiguous, fuzzy data and with guessing its meaning. |
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| **Q3. Which way of forming Judgments and making choices is most natural?**  The **Thinking** (T) side of our brain analyzes information in a **DETACHED**, objective fashion. It operates from factual principles, deduces and forms conclusions systematically. It is our logical nature.  The **Feeling** (F) side of our brain forms conclusions in an **ATTACHED** and somewhat global manner, based on likes/dislikes, impact on others, and human and aesthetic values. It is our subjective nature.  While everyone uses both means of forming conclusions, each person has a natural bias towards one over the other so that when they give us conflicting directions - one side is the natural trump card or tiebreaker. | |
| **Thinking Characteristics**   * Instinctively search for facts and logic in a decision situation. * Naturally notices tasks and work to be accomplished. * Easily able to provide an objective and critical analysis. * Accept conflict as a natural, normal part of relationships with people. | **Feeling Characteristics**   * Instinctively employ personal feelings and impact on people in decision situations * Naturally sensitive to people needs and reactions. * Naturally seek consensus and popular opinions. * Unsettled by conflict; have almost a toxic reaction to disharmony. |
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| **Q4. What is your "action orientation" towards the outside world?**  All people use both ***judging*** (thinking and feeling) and ***perceiving*** (sensing and intuition) processes to store information, organize our thoughts, make decisions, take actions and manage our lives. Yet **one** of these processes (Judging **or** Perceiving) tends to **take the lead** in our relationship with the **outside world** . . . while the other governs our inner world.  A **Judging** (J) style approaches the outside world **WITH A PLAN** and is oriented towards organizing one's surroundings, being prepared, making decisions and reaching closure and completion.  A **Perceiving** (P) style takes the outside world **AS IT COMES** and is adopting and adapting, flexible, open-ended and receptive to new opportunities and changing game plans. | |
| **Judging Characteristics**   * Plan many of the details in advance before moving into action. * Focus on task-related action; complete meaningful segments before moving on. * Work best and avoid stress when able to keep ahead of deadlines. * Naturally use targets, dates and standard routines to manage life. | **Perceiving Characteristics**   * Comfortable moving into action without a plan; plan on-the-go. * Like to multitask, have variety, mix work and play. * Naturally tolerant of time pressure; work best close to the deadlines. * Instinctively avoid commitments which interfere with flexibility, freedom and variety |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Choose which best fits:** | **Judging (J)** | **Perceiving (P)** | | |